



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/783,230	02/19/2004	Alan F. Jankowski	IL-10692B	7425

7590 01/10/2007
Ann M. Lee
ATTORNEY
L-703
P.O. Box 808
Livermore, CA 94551

EXAMINER

WALKER, KEITH D

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
----------	--------------

1745

SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD OF RESPONSE	MAIL DATE	DELIVERY MODE
3 MONTHS	01/10/2007	PAPER

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire 6 MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/783,230

Applicant(s)

JANKOWSKI ET AL.

Examiner

Keith Walker

Art Unit

1745

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 19 October 2006.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☐ Claim(s) 1-9 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-9 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to: See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413) |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application |
| Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

Response to Amendment

Claims 1-9 are pending examination.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

1. Claims 1-9 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by US Patent 5,604,048 (Nishihara).

Nishihara teaches a fuel cell with a solid electrolyte and an electrode with a plurality of pores with an average diameter of 1 – 5 microns (Abstract, 1:10-20, 4:25-40). In one example, tapered pores are formed in the electrode where the average pore diameter on one side of the electrode is 1.92 microns and 2.11 microns on the other side (25:15-20). Since the two pore diameters are within 10% of each other, then 90% of the pore volume is within a 10% band of the mode pore volume.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

2. Claims 1-9 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over US Patent 5,114,803 (Ishihara).

Regarding claims 1, 4, & 7 Ishihara discloses a fuel cell with a porous electrode (Col 2, ll. 5-7), where the pore diameters are substantially uniform (Col. 7, ll. 19-20). There is a reasonable expectation that the term substantially uniform teaches of pores having a substantially uniform pore distribution and thus fall within the instant claimed pore distribution range, absent clear evidence to the contrary. It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time the invention was made to optimize the uniformity of the pore diameters in order to keep even distribution of air through the electrode and improve the function of the battery, since it is held that discovering an optimum value of a result effective variable involves only routine skill in the art (*In re Boesch*, 617 F.2d 272, 205 USPQ 215). Generally, differences in ranges will not support the patentability of subject matter encompassed by the prior art unless there is evidence indicating such ranges are critical (MPEP 2144.04). The fuel stack of claim 7 is a combination of multiple fuel cells, and a duplication of parts has no patentable significance unless a new and unexpected result is produced (*In re Harza*, 274 F.2d 669, 124 USPQ 378 (CCPA 1960)).

Regarding claims 2, 6, & 9, Ishihara describes pore diameters of 0.7 μ m, 1.3 μ m, & 8.5 μ m (Table 1).

Regarding claims 3, 5, & 8, the pore diameter of the electrode varies to progressively change from one surface of the electrode to the other surface, thereby

Art Unit: 1745

creating a tapered pore (Col. 4, ll. 53-55). The ratio of the pore diameters from each surface varies from 100:1 to 5:1 (Col. 4, ll. 39-42).

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments filed 10/19/06 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

Applicant argues the Nishihara reference does not teach tapered pores because “progressively changing pore sizes across a surface are not tapered pores.” It is unclear how the definition of tapered pores is not met by a “progressively changing pore size across a surface.” Since the pore on one side of the electrolyte is on average a larger size than the pore on the other side of the electrolyte, this teaches that the pore diameter changes through the electrolyte by tapering down from the larger pore diameter to the smaller pore diameter. Hence, the pores are taught to taper, having a first pore opening smaller in size than a second pore opening, as claimed in claim 1.

Applicant argues the Ishihara reference does not teach tapered pores “having a first pore opening smaller in size than a second pore opening” because “progressively changing pore size across a surface.” However, it is unclear how this definition does not meet the definition of a tapered pore. Furthermore, as discussed above, Ishihara teaches a solid electrolyte having a pore diameter ratio between surfaces of the electrolyte. This ratio teaches the pores to be larger on one surface than the other surface and hence the pores are tapered, having a first pore opening smaller in size than a second pore opening.

In response to applicant's argument that the references fail to show certain features of applicant's invention, it is noted that the features upon which applicant relies (i.e., the method of generating a tapered pore in the groups of pore sizes disclosed) are not recited in the rejected claim(s). Although the claims are interpreted in light of the specification, limitations from the specification are not read into the claims. See *In re Van Geuns*, 988 F.2d 1181, 26 USPQ2d 1057 (Fed. Cir. 1993). The claims are drawn to a product and not a method and the method of forming the tapered pores is disclosed throughout the Ishihara reference.

Conclusion

THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL. Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the mailing date of this final action.


Art Unit: 1745

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Keith Walker whose telephone number is 571-272-3458. The examiner can normally be reached on Mon. - Fri. 8am - 5pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's Trainer, Susy Tsang-Foster can be reached on 571-272-1293. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

K. Walker


SUSY TSANG-FOSTER
PRIMARY EXAMINER